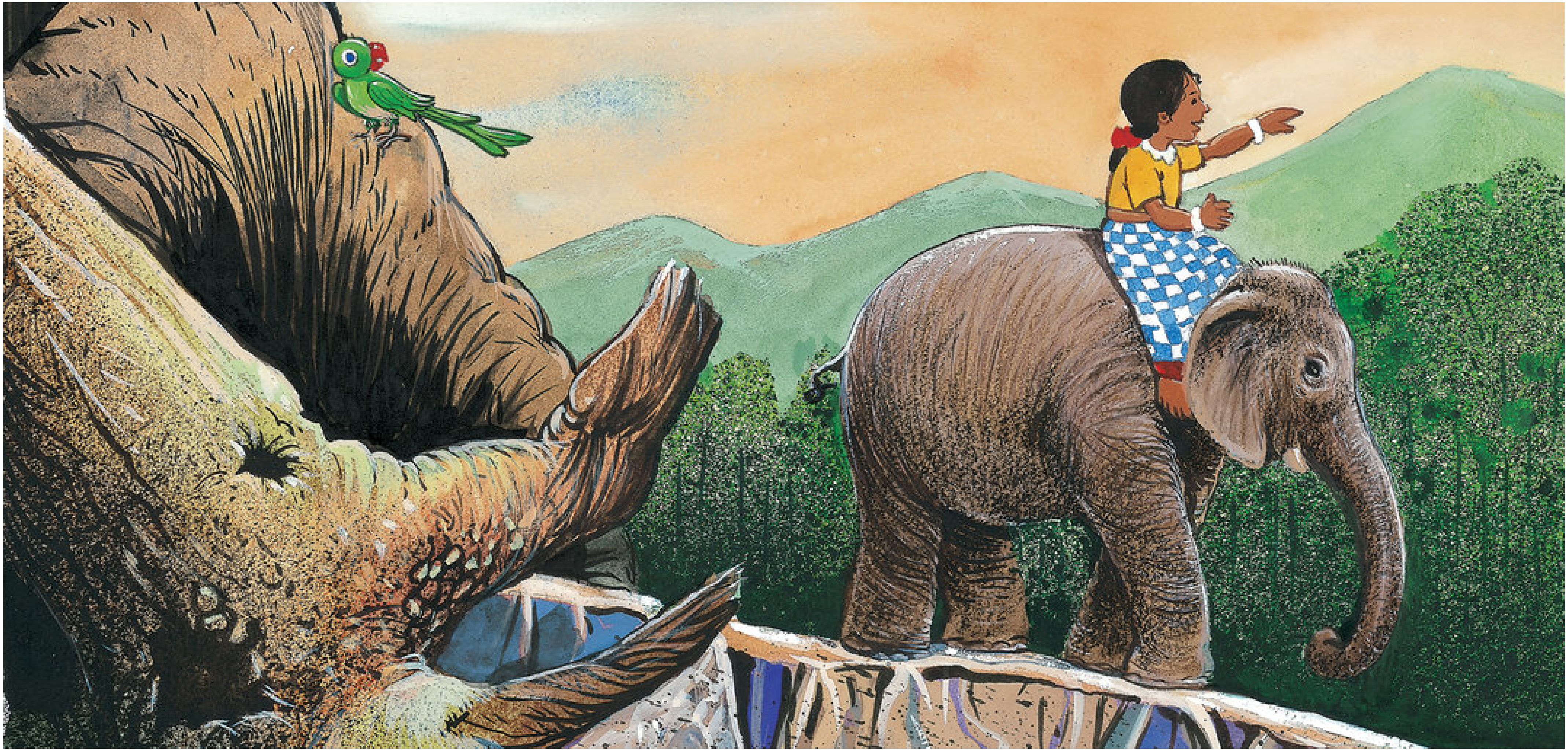


PRATHAM BOOKS
A Book in Every Child's Hand

Level 4

Jungle Brew

Author: Tanya Luther Agarwal
Illustrator: Sanjay Sarkar

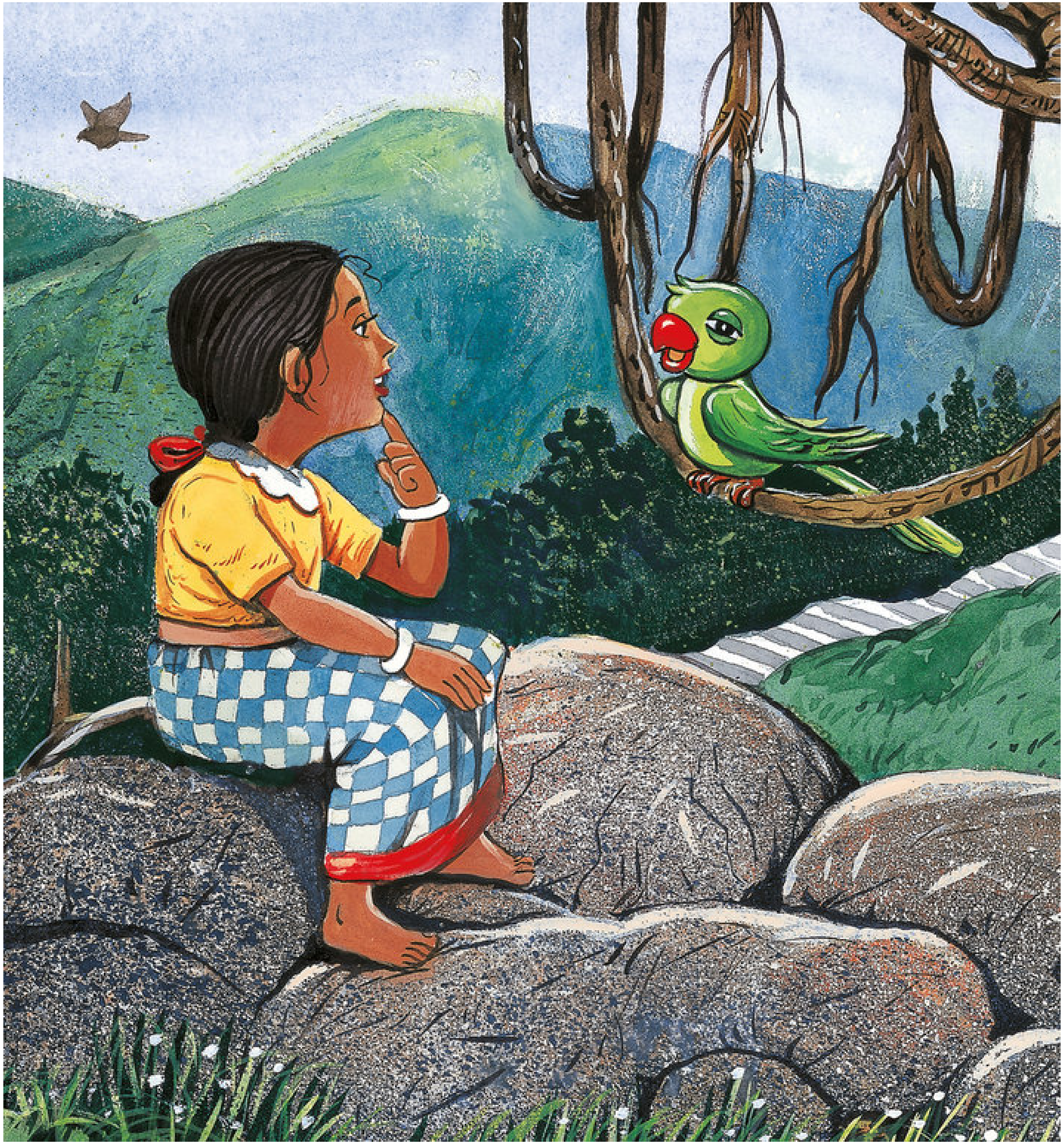


In a little hilly hamlet of southern India, lived a young girl called Bulbuli. She lived in a hut with her mother. Her house was surrounded by the tallest and greenest trees you would have ever seen. On misty days, the leaves of plants and trees held the biggest dewdrops you could imagine. Bulbuli was as sprightly as her name. She, along with her friends, would prance through the endless forests around her village. She loved to take in deep breaths every morning as the air carried all kinds of different aromas. Sometimes she could smell a sweet, sweet fragrance. At other times it was a strong and sharp scent. Then there were days when all she could smell was a familiar bouquet.



Waking up to those refreshing scents was the best way for Bulbuli to begin her day. Then there was Totaram the parrot, who would fly in to the village every morning, perch himself atop a tree facing Bulbuli’s hut, and tell her of the entire buzz in the forest. He would also tell her of his flights to different lands and of people who lived there.

Bulbuli loved to hear Totaram’s tales. She longed to visit these lands and see their different sights. Her heart would race and thump loudly as Totaram would speak but it would always end with a deep sigh. She had to stop dreaming of faraway lands when she had never even been to Senseless Point.



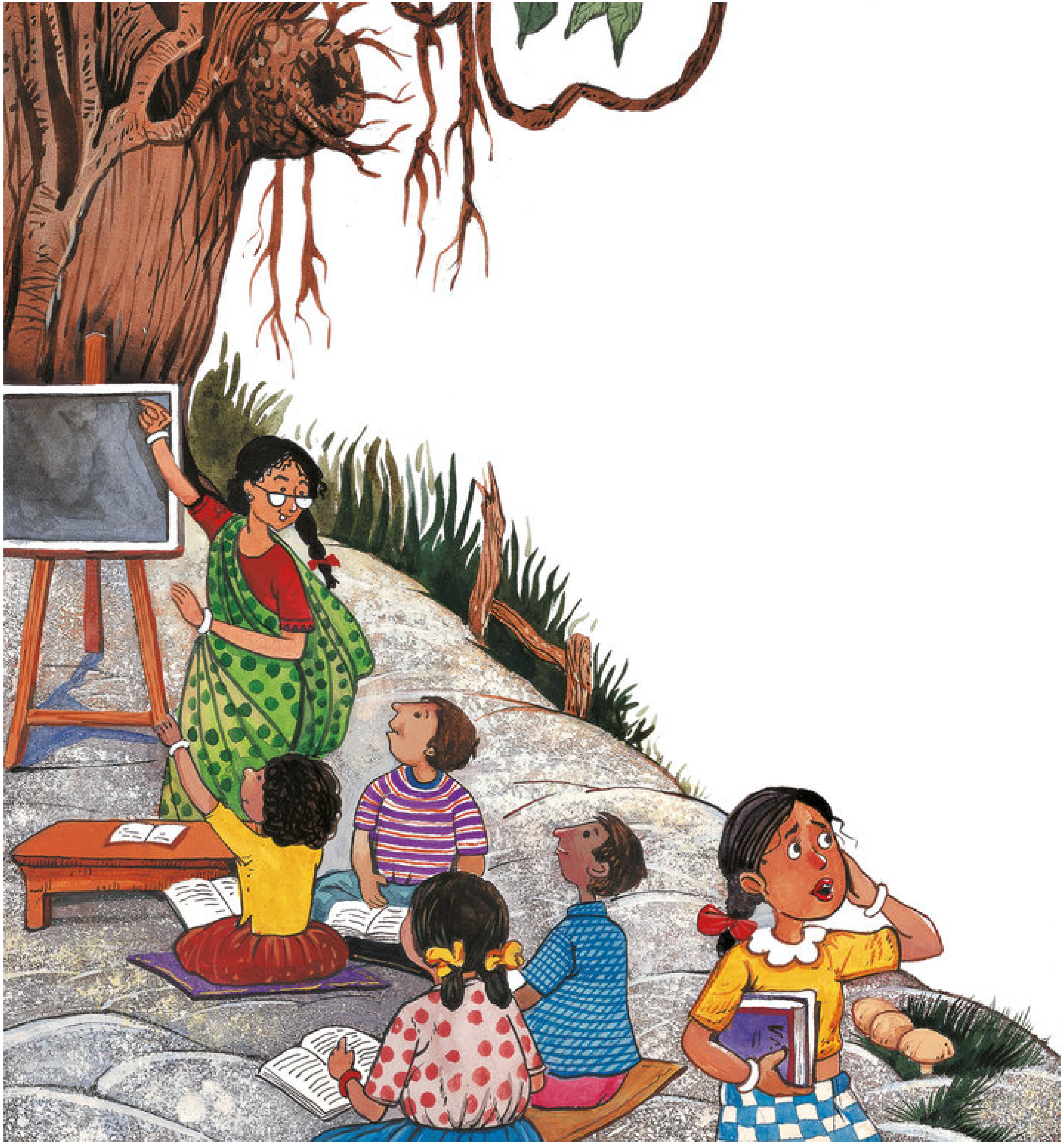
Everybody in the village talked of Senseless Point. A few people from the neighbouring villages had been there but no one from her own village. From all the talk around, it seemed like a mysterious place promising an experience of a lifetime.

Bulbuli believed that if she ever had the chance to go to Senseless Point, she would return to her hamlet and describe it to everyone. She would tell everyone about this mysterious place.



On this particular morning, Bulbuli waited for Totaram's whistle. She fed the hens and collected their eggs. Next she fed the cows and then milked them. All the while she paused from time to time to listen to Totaram's call. Tired of waiting, she left for her school. All the students in her school sat under a huge banyan tree.





Bulbuli could hardly pay attention to what was being taught. Her eyes searched for Totaram, who had never missed visiting her ever since the time they became friends.

Several days passed and Bulbuli grew more concerned about Totaram. She worried that Totaram might be hurt. She had no way of knowing if he was safe. Bulbuli grew more despondent with each day. After school, she would walk through the forests calling out to Totaram.

“Hello! Are you here somewhere Totaram?” she would yell cupping her mouth with her hands. But there was no response.



Then one very early morning, even before the sun had risen, she heard a very noisy and distressed bird call. She leapt out of bed and rushed out to look. It was Totaram. “Bulbuli! Wake up! I need to talk to you!”

Bulbuli stretched out her arm so that Totaram could perch on it. “Where have you been, Totaram? I have been so worried about you. What is the matter? You seem very upset!”

“There is trouble at Senseless Point. War has broken out in the forest.”
“Calm down Totaram or you will wake the entire village. What kind of trouble are you talking about? And who is at war?” asked a puzzled Bulbuli.

“The jungle... Oops! Sorry, Bulbuli. I do need to stop screaming. The jungles are at war. Senseless Point is not what it used to be. All the animals are frightened. They do not know what is going to happen next. Bulbuli, we have to think of something,” cried Totaram anxiously.

“I still do not understand. How can jungles be at war? Why don’t you take me to Senseless Point?” said Bulbuli.

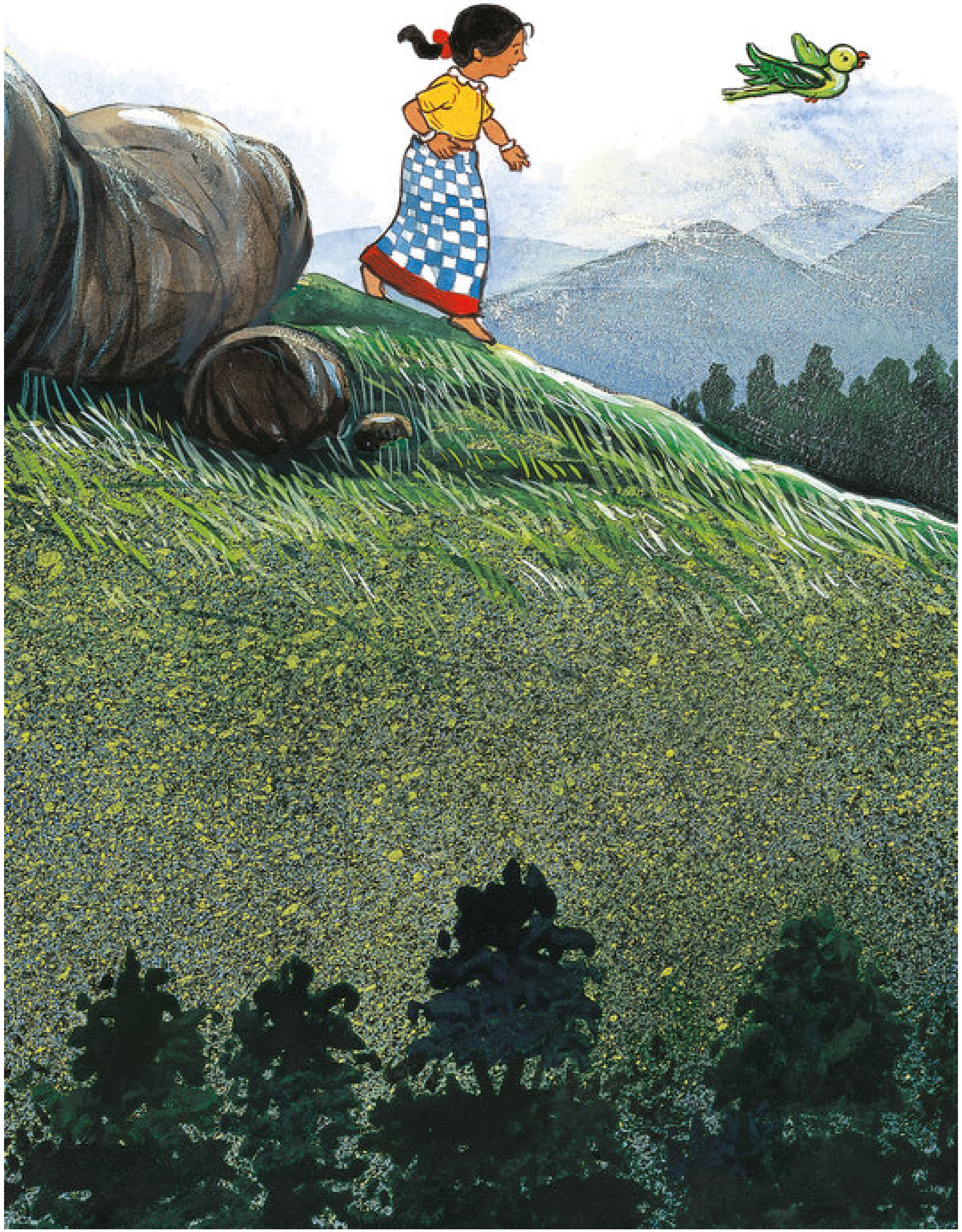


Totaram grew even more agitated. “Senseless Point is two sunrises and two dusks away. Your small feet will not be able to carry you there.”

“My mind is bigger than my feet, Totaram. Don’t let the size of my feet fool you. I’m not afraid to do difficult things. Besides, the least I can do is try.”

“The journey is long and hard, Bulbuli. I’m not sure…” mused Totaram.

“Well, I cannot think of any other way to help. You must take me to Senseless Point,” pleaded Bulbuli. Totaram thought for a long time. Reluctantly, he agreed. “All right then, but we must leave immediately,” he said.



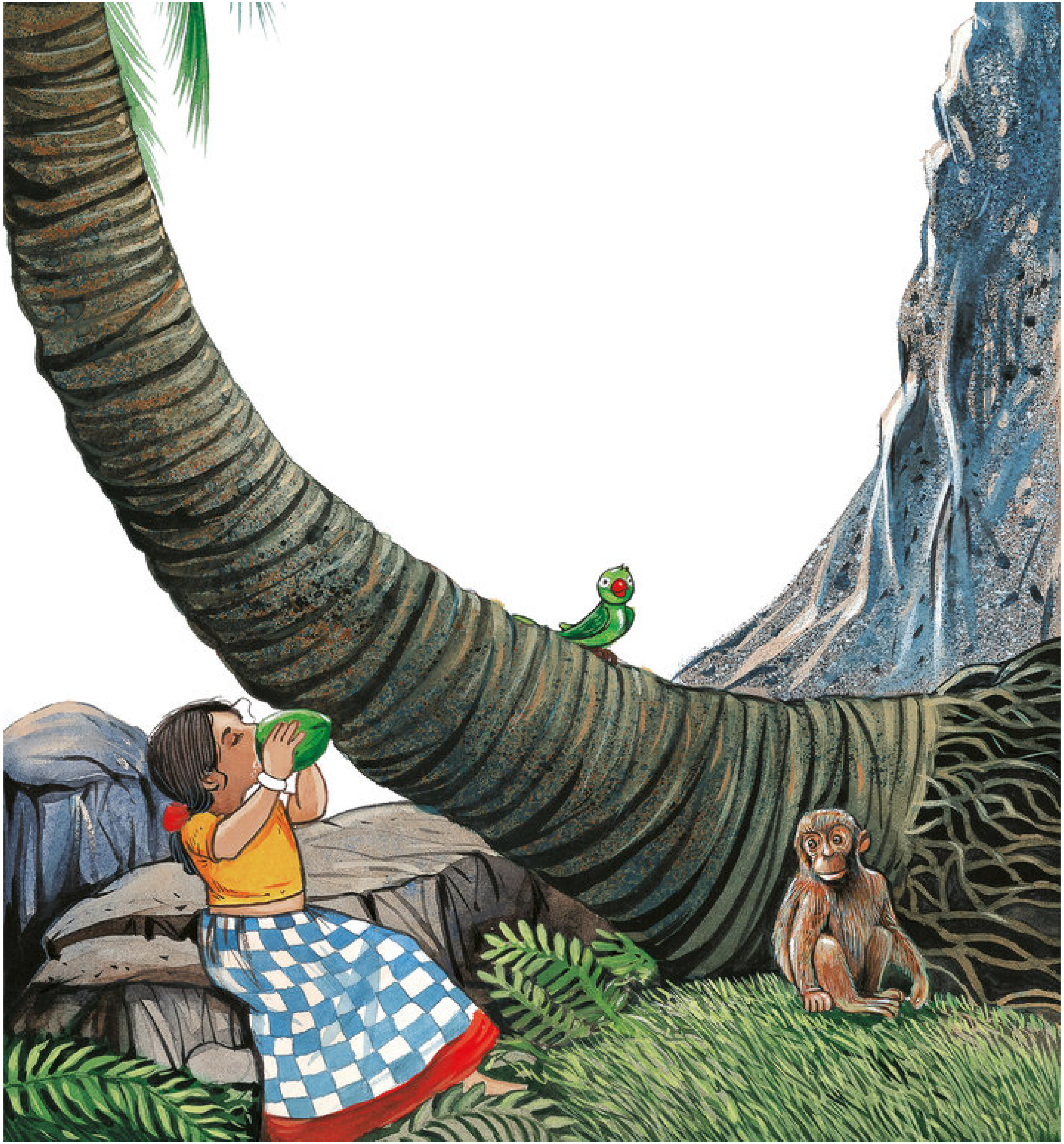
Just then Bulbuli realised that she could not leave without telling her mother. Totaram suggested that they stop on the way to get Koyal, his friend to tell her mother first thing in the morning.

“Hurry now. We must not lose any time,” Totaram urged.

So off they went. Totaram flew just above Bulbuli’s head and led the way. Bulbuli walked and walked for several hours. She was not unused to walking through thickets and tall grass. But then she grew hungry and tired. Totaram could see that she needed to eat and drink.

“Just a little longer Bulbuli. There are coconut trees up ahead,” said Totaram. When they reached the coconut plantations, Totaram let out a shrill whistle. “Whoeeeee…”

From nowhere swung a frisky monkey. He was so full of beans that Totaram had to chide him.
“Calm down, Bandaroo! I have work for you. Stop prancing around.”

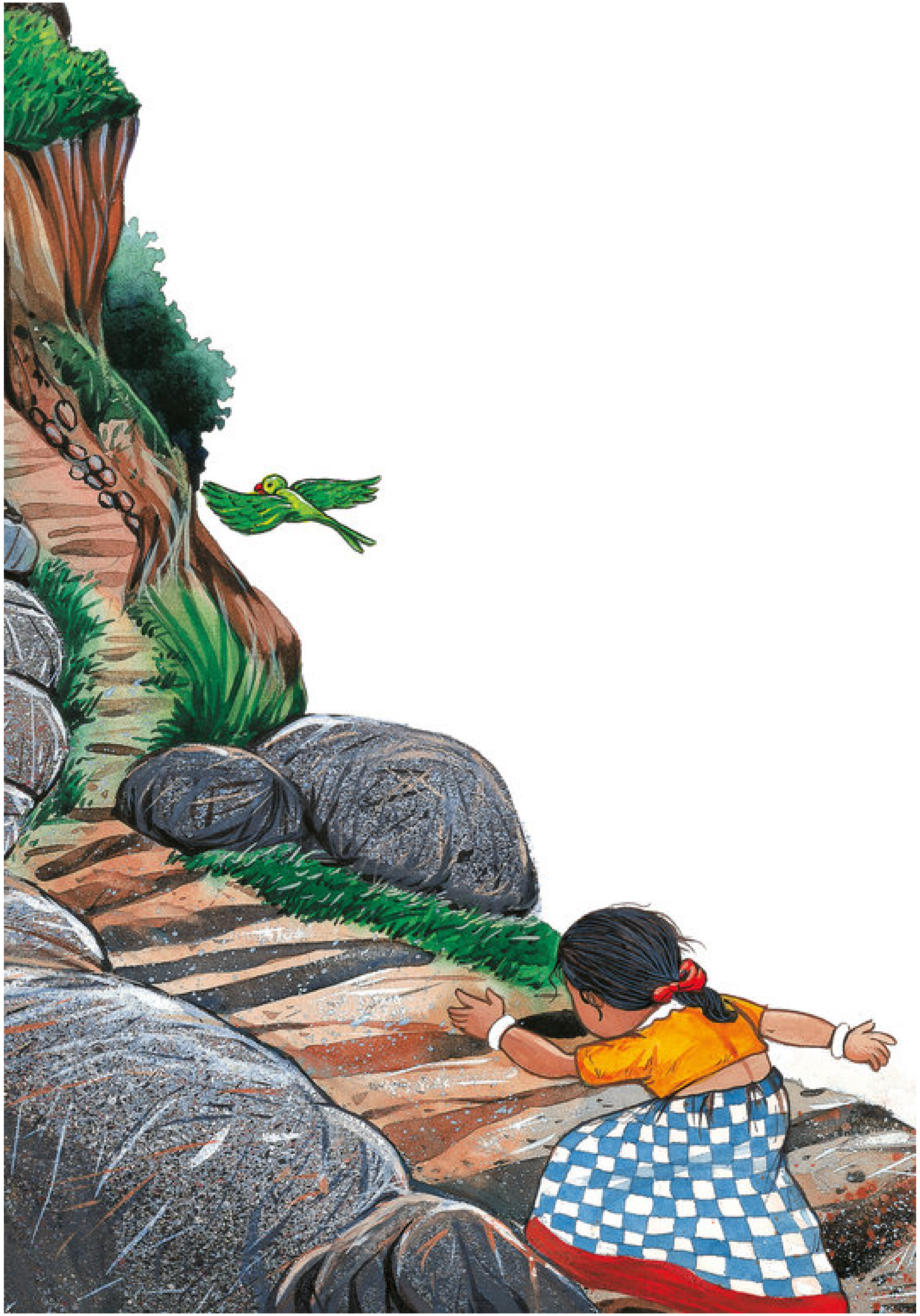


"Alright Totaram. What is it?" asked Bandaroo.

"Pluck a couple of coconuts and toss them below. My friend Bulbuli here is hungry," informed Totaram. Bandaroo obliged. He threw three green coconuts down. They split open as they crashed to the ground. Bulbuli hungrily reached out for them and scooped out the creamy kernel. She ate quickly when all the while Bandaroo squealed with delight from the tree above.

"Thanks Bandaroo. That was filling," said Bulbuli.

"Call me anytime folks. I'm the best thrower in the jungle," said Bandaroo chirpily.



Totaram and Bulbuli carried on with their journey. After several hours, Bulbuli grew weary and exhausted. However, she was not going to give up. She had an opportunity of a lifetime here. A visit to Senseless Point for people around her village was like a pilgrimage.

Each time that she felt fatigued, Bulbuli tried to picture Senseless Point in her mind. She imagined a beautiful place that could fill people's hearts with happiness. That scene in her mind was enough to make her forget how footsore she was. The first dusk of their journey set in. 'Another day to go,' thought Bulbuli. Bulbuli rested under a tree while Totaram found a comfortable spot on a branch above. Soon it was dawn.

Bulbuli was awakened by the chattering of what seemed like a million birds in the jungle. Bulbuli took several big breaths and stretched her arms out to wake up her body. The morning felt different. She could smell all the familiar scents that she used to every morning, but somehow, they were stronger and more refreshing.

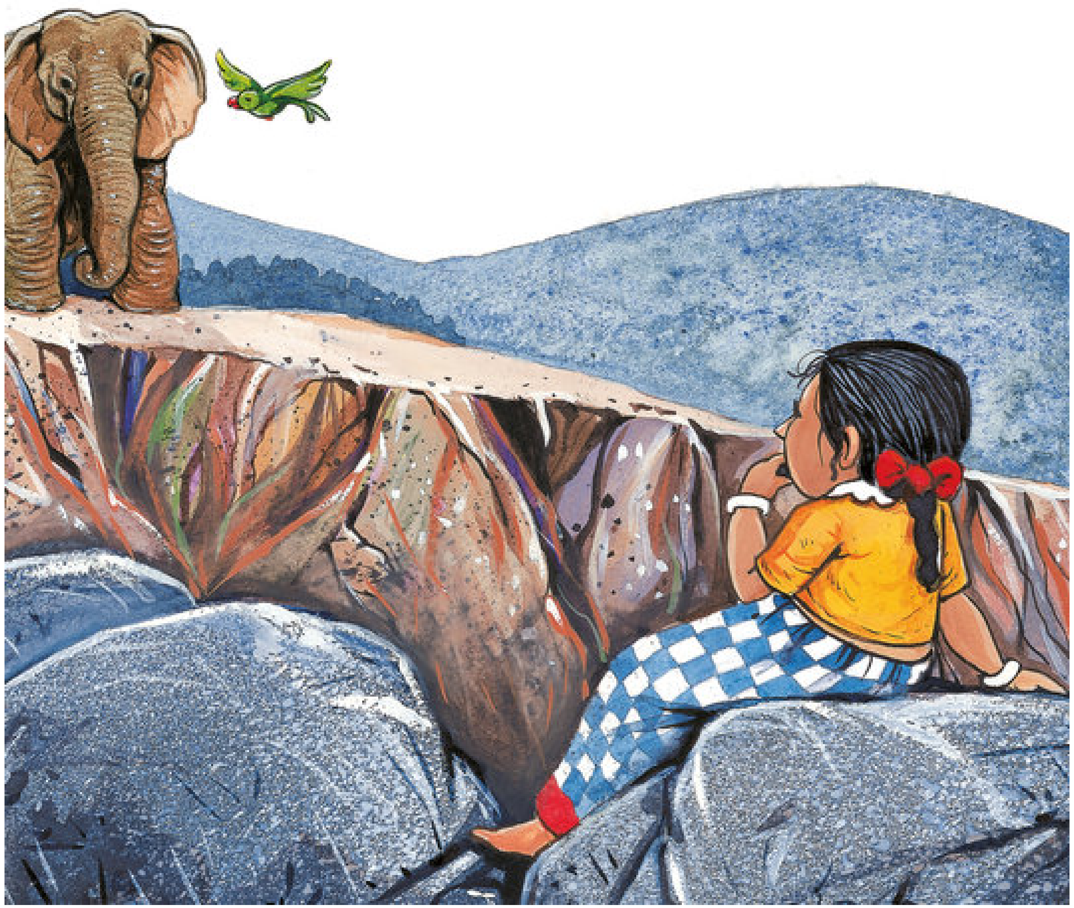


“Totaram! Can you smell the freshness in the air? I love it!” she told the parrot. “You have all day to take your whiffs. Let us get moving,” ordered Totaram. Totaram and she talked little the next day. He could see that Bulbuli was tired, hungry and thirsty.

Totaram flew down to perch on her shoulder. “There is a stream nearby. We will rest there for a while.”

In a little while, Bulbuli heard the sound of rushing water. In no time they arrived at the stream. The
clear water glistened in the sunlight. The water seemed to be racing with itself to get somewhere. It was a
beautiful sight.

Bulbuli leaned over and cupped the water in her hands and drank all that she could. She splashed water on her face and refreshed herself. Just as she was done, Totaram landed on her shoulder once again and nudged her to stretch out her palms. He then dropped red, delicious berries in them.



“Oh Totaram! You are the nicest friend I know. Thank you so much,” smiled Bulbuli. “Go ahead and eat them. Berries are my favourite food. I have already eaten too many today!” gushed Totaram. They rested for a while and then set out once again. Bulbuli walked and walked while Totaram flew just above her talking to her all the while.

After several hours, Bulbuli sat down. “I need to rest Totaram. I am really very exhausted. Totaram let out a loud whistle. Within minutes, an elephant strolled up to them. Totaram introduced Hathi to Bulbuli and told him of their journey to Senseless Point.

“I believe only a human can help the war in the jungle. Animals are running away from what is paradise for us,” said a concerned Hathi. “Will you give Bulbuli a ride, Hathi?” asked Totaram. “Her will is strong but her strength is failing.”



“Of course. Climb up, little girl, but I can only take you up to the trail. After that you are on your own. I cannot be away from my group for long,” said Hathi. Bulbuli was relieved. Her small legs needed rest and she was able to get a spectacular view of the jungle from atop Hathi’s back.

Hathi, like Totaram, had many tales to tell. The day passed easily. At dusk, the trio settled by a cave. Totaram and Hathi gathered dried leaves and straw and made a bed for Bulbuli. As soon as Bulbuli lay down, she dozed off. At the third sunrise, Totaram did not have
to wake Bulbuli.

She was up at the crack of dawn. Totaram brought her some purple berries this time, which she ate with delight. The young girl, the parrot and the elephant began the last leg of their journey. Bulbuli was becoming more uncertain of what to expect. First there was the anticipation of Senseless Point. Then there was the uneasiness of the jungles at war.

As she was getting closer to her destination, her heart began to fill with thrill and excitement but with a tinge of apprehension.



Shortly, Hathi stopped. He said, “It is time for me to say goodbye. I must return to my family. All the animals will be grateful to you if you could help end the war of the jungles. We cannot bear to live anywhere else. These jungles have been our home for generations.”

Bulbuli thanked Hathi for carrying her as far as he did.
“I hope the jungles hear me out, Hathi. I promise to do my best.”
Totaram sat on Bulbuli’s shoulder and asked her to slow down.
“Look at that trail going downward. That will lead us to Senseless Point,” instructed Totaram.

At this point, a strange humming sound enveloped the jungle. As they walked further, the noise grew louder and louder. “Where is that noise coming from?” asked Bulbuli covering her ears.

“That is the sound of three jungles at war, and it is only going to get louder as we approach Senseless Point,” hollered Totaram.



Bulbuli could barely believe what was going on. Never before had she encountered such a scene. As she climbed down the trail and looked around, she saw nothing out of the ordinary. But the clamour was ear splitting.

Totaram pecked at her ear to get her attention. With the shrieks of the jungles, Bulbuli could hardly hear Totaram. With three more steps, Bulbuli found herself amidst a clearing. It was as if all the trees of the jungle had suddenly disappeared. There were hillocks stretching as far as her eyes could see.

“This is Senseless Point. This is a place where everything grows wild. Humans hardly ever come here,” said Totaram. Then Totaram began screaming, “A human being is here, a human being!” But in the deafening din of the jungles, his voice went unheard.

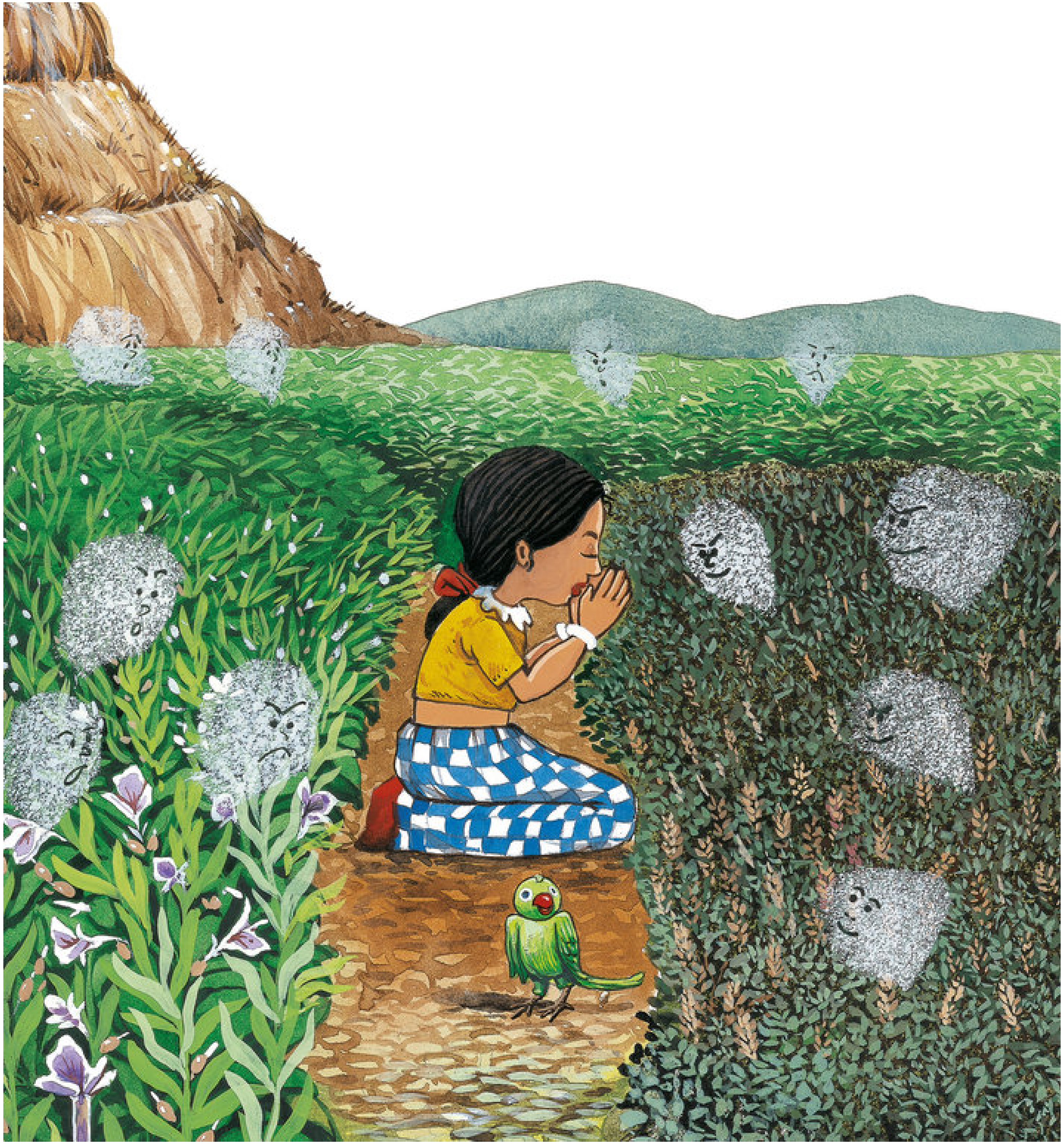
Bulbuli could not get herself to remove her hands from her ears. She could not understand what the jungles were saying, but by now it was clear that there were three jungles involved.



In the distance, just in front of her, she could see green beds. On her right, were hundreds and hundreds of shrubs with magenta flowers. On her left, she could see very tall plants. The sight before her was breathtaking. And the aroma was stunning.

Bulbuli's face lit up with wonder. She turned towards each jungle several times over, to take in the splendour. Almost instantly, the noise of the jungles began to die down, as if the jungles had spotted her.

That was when Bulbuli took her first deep breath. She could smell the aroma of tea. Then in the next breath, she was drawn to the fragrance on her right. It was a spicy fragrance- something she was familiar with. Unsure, she breathed in some more and said to herself, "Ah! Elaichi!"



A gentle breeze pushed her to her left. Her head turned and she smiled when she took in her next deep breath. It was an attractive and pure smell. Instantly, she recognised the plant.

Bulbuli joined her hands and bowed with reverence. “You are Tulsi!”

Bulbuli was overwhelmed by the fragrances. They smelled like three octaves of the same musical note – Sa, Sa, Sa. Bulbuli felt joyful. She stretched her arms and twirled around with her eyes closed.

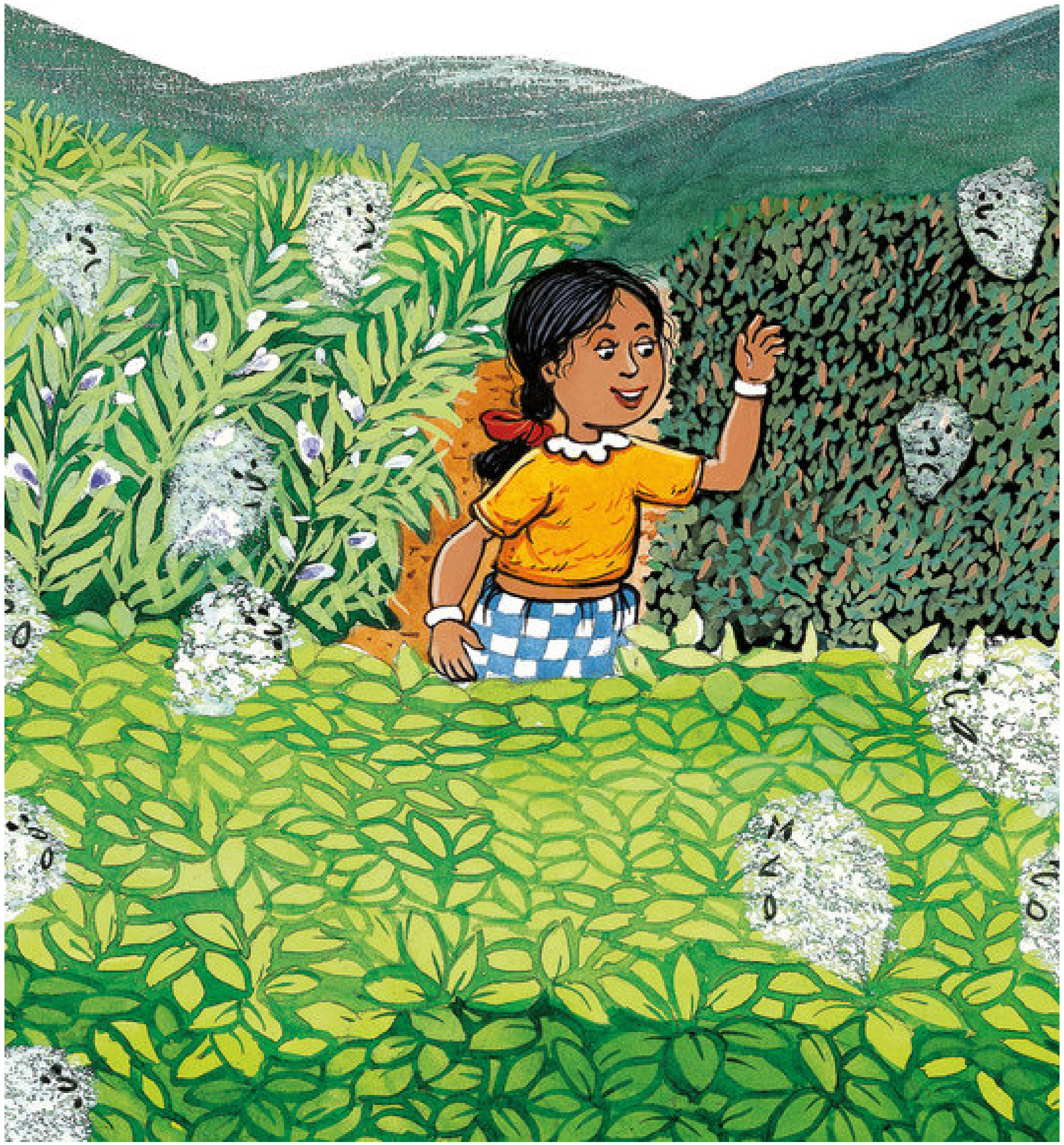


The fragrances and the musical notes played in her head, over and over again. All her senses were alive. This was a magical moment for her. Never before had she felt so delighted.

Just then, the elaichi plant spoke, “Maybe this little girl could punish the tea bushes.”

“Maybe. Little girl, can you stop the tea bushes from stealing our fragrance?” asked a Tulsi plant.

Bulbuli was stunned to hear the jungles speak to her. Before she could respond, a tea bush spoke up. “Maybe if these two were not around, humans might be able to ap-preciate our aroma.”



“Is that what this war is all about, worrying about your smells getting stolen?” asked a puzzled Bulbuli. She smiled to herself. “Do you have any idea what you all smell like from where I stand? I can smell each of you distinctly.”

“It really is not our fault. We are not fragrance thieves. Our leaves take on the smell of anything that grows around us. In fact, with tulsi and elaichi around us, we have to work extra hard to keep our identity. It is not as if the tulsi jungle and the elaichi jungle have lost their perfume to me. You just said that you can smell their individual whiff,” said a tea bush.

Bulbuli took several deep breaths to calm down. She discovered that every time she took in a collected breath of tea, elaichi and tulsi, it helped her relax. There was something very soothing about the three of them together.



“My mother has taught me important things from the Vedas. Do you know what they have to say?” asked Bulbuli. “The sun should be a giver of happiness, the sky should be a giver of happiness, and all trees and plants should be givers of happiness. All these should give us peace of mind. Do you think you are doing that?”

The jungles fell silent. They were listening to Bulbuli. Bulbuli had an idea. She whispered something to Totaram. He flew off from her shoulder almost immediately.

A tulsi plant spoke. “The elaichi and tulsi grow wild. We have no control over where and how we grow. And neither do we tell the wind which way to blow.”

Bulbuli thought for a moment. “In that case, how can you blame the tea? Maybe you ought to blame the wind.”



“The wind! Tulsi and Elaichi fight constantly with the wind too. They do not want the wind to take their perfume out of here,” said a tea bush. Bulbuli was aghast. “Is that true?” she asked.

Neither of the two guilty jungles replied. Bulbuli sighed deeply. Just then Totaram returned. He carried a few tulsi leaves, some elaichi seeds and tea leaves in his beak and placed them on Bulbuli’s palm. Bulbuli gently rubbed them together. She raised her palm to smell them. She let out a loud delighted shriek.

The jungles screamed back in unison, “What is the matter, little girl? Are you all right?”



Bulbuli laughed with joy. “You can now wave the white flag for peace. I have a bit of all three of you in my hand and together you smell like nothing else in the world. One whiff of all of you together is so relaxing.”

Totatram whispered in Bulbuli’s ear. She smiled. “Totaram tells me that the animals in the jungles have known just which leaf to eat when they are unwell. Even the birds have eaten your fruit and leaves together to know how quickly you can make them better again. Did you jungles even know that?” asked Bulbuli.

“These animals eat your leaves to relieve all kinds of sickness. They even come here to Senseless Point to rejuvenate themselves. Totaram, get me a bunch of tea, elaichi and tulsi. I am going back home to brew a warm cup of tea with tulsi and elaichi for my mother. Celebrate, jungles! The world is going to know how well you taste together. Which means that you have to get on well with each other. Can you do that?” asked Bulbuli.



Bulbuli and Totaram giggled. So did the jungles. This time the noise level rose not because of the fighting, but with laughter. Bulbuli was relieved to see the war coming to an end. She realised that the jungles had each been able to feel pride in their uniqueness.

Bulbuli asked Totaram to collect bunches of tea, tulsi leaves along with elaichi seeds. “Jungles, I am now going to return to my village with the most exquisite and refreshing tea, one with tulsi and elaichi. And I promise to return with people from my village to introduce them to Senseless Point. The most refreshing place on earth!”

That is how tulsi and elaichi flavoured tea was discovered. Have you tried it yet?

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Jungle Brew

(English)

Bulbuli had heard so much about the mysterious place in the jungle that everybody talked about but nobody had visited. Was she actually going to have the biggest adventure of her life with only Totaram for company?

This is a Level 4 book for children who can read fluently and with confidence.